What Is Claimed Is:

5

- 1. A method of manufacturing fine metal particles, which comprises the steps of:

 dispersing molten metal particles in a dispersion medium by way of a process wherein a
 low melting point metal containing at least 10% by mass of tin and selected from
 metals excluding alkali metals is mixed with the dispersion medium to obtain a
 mixture which is subsequently heated to melt the low melting point metal, and a
 dispersing energy is applied to the dispersion medium to disperse the low melting
 point metal in the dispersion medium to obtain a molten metal particle-dispersed
 substance; and
- forming solid particles having an average particle diameter of 15 µm or less by cooling the molten metal particle-dispersed substance to thereby solidify the molten metal particles;
- wherein said step of dispersing molten metal particles in a dispersion medium and said step

 of forming solid particles are preceded by a step of mixing the dispersion medium

 with a particle coalescence-preventing agent which is capable of adsorbing onto

 and/or reacting with at least the molten metal particles and also capable of

 preventing the generation of coalescence at least among the molten metal particles,

 said particle coalescence-preventing agent being selected from the group consisting

 of rosin and/or derivatives thereof, tin salts of rosin and/or derivatives thereof, fatty

 acids, tin salts of fatty acids, organic acids and tin salts of organic acids.

- 2. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to claim 1, wherein said particle coalescence-preventing agent is rosin and/or a derivative thereof.
- 5 3. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to claim 1, wherein said particle coalescence-preventing agent is rosin soap.
 - 4. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to claim 1, wherein said particle coalescence-preventing agent is a tin salt of an organic acid having a carboxyl group.

10

15

20

- 5. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to any one of claims 1 to 4, which further comprises a step of removing the solidified metal particles obtained in said step of forming solid particles from said dispersion medium, thereby leaving a residual liquid, which is then recycled as a particle dispersion medium.
- 6. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the low melting point metal is employed at a ratio of 0.1-100g per 100g of the dispersion medium, and the particle coalescence-preventing agent is employed at a ratio of 0.01-10g per 100g of the dispersion medium.

7. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the application of said dispersing energy to the dispersion medium is performed by making use of a high-speed agitator comprising a cup-shaped stator having slits in the sidewall thereof, and a rotator mounted inside the stator and having a rotary vane, wherein a fluid material is permitted to be introduced through said slits into said stator, in which the fluid material is subjected to a high shearing force through an interaction between said stator and said rotator by actuating said rotator to rotate at a high speed relative to said stator, the fluid material being subsequently discharged from the stator.

- 8. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to claim 7, wherein the number of revolutions of the high-speed agitator is at least 5000 per minute, and the temperature of said heating is at least 10°C higher than the melting point of the low melting point metal.
- 9. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the low melting point metal is employed at a ratio of 0.1-100g per 100g of the dispersion medium, the particle coalescence-preventing agent is employed at a ratio of 0.01-10g per 100g of the dispersion medium, and the application of said dispersing energy to

the dispersion medium is performed by making use of a high-speed agitator comprising a cup-shaped stator having slits in the sidewall thereof, and a rotator mounted inside the stator and having a rotary vane, wherein a fluid material is permitted to be introduced through said slits into said stator, in which the fluid material is subjected to a high shearing force through an interaction between said stator and said rotator by actuating said rotator to rotate at a high speed relative to said stator, the fluid material being subsequently discharged from the stator.

10. The method of manufacturing fine metal particles according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the low melting point metal is employed at a ratio of 0.1-100g per 100g of the dispersion medium, the particle coalescence-preventing agent is employed at a ratio of 0.01-10g per 100g of the dispersion medium, and the application of said dispersing energy to the dispersion medium is performed by making use of a high-speed agitator comprising a cup-shaped stator having slits in the sidewall thereof, and a rotator mounted inside the stator and having a rotary vane, wherein a fluid material is permitted to be introduced through said slits into said stator, in which the fluid material is subjected to a high shearing force through an interaction between said stator and said rotator by actuating said rotator to rotate at a high speed relative to said stator, the fluid material being subsequently discharged from the stator, and the number of revolution of the high-speed agitator is at least 5000 per minute, and the temperature of said heating is at least 10°C higher than the melting point of the low melting point metal.